

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN McCAIN
CHAIRMAN, SENATE COMMITTEE ON
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
FULL COMMITTEE HEARING
ON THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT REPORT
JULY 18, 2000

C Earlier this year we examined the science behind global warming as a means of defining the problem. Today, we hope to further our efforts to understand this issue by discussing the Climate Change Impact On the United States, the National Assessment Report.

C This morning we will examine, as noted in the National Assessment Report, climate change impacts on the United States. Because the report is currently in its 60-day public comment period which ends August 11, we feel that this is an opportune time for the Committee to discuss this very important matter. We hope that today's discussion will spur others to review the document and provide comments to the White House.

C I know that some have asked that today's proceeding be postponed until later in the year. I feel this would be a mistake given the timeframe that the Administration has laid out for completing this report. I believe it is important to have this open discussion while the report is still in its draft form thus providing valuable input as it is finalized. Postponing this hearing will not afford the Committee the opportunity to examine the report before finalization.

C I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today. Although there are many issues that need to be addressed, I hope the witness will focus on the following: How can two computer models which give different results be used to reach a consensus conclusion, why federally-funded US

models were not selected for the study, and what role does the ocean's dynamics play in these analyses.

C As we review this document and other weather predictions, we should keep in mind that these predictions or forecasts have very real meanings to people and the economy. This past Sunday's edition of the Washington Post contained an article that demonstrates the importance of accurate weather forecasting.

C The article states that the Department of Agriculture and National Weather Service officials predicted that severe drought could cripple the farm economy in much of the Midwest and Deep South. Secretary Glickman warned that the lack of rain could be catastrophic to farmers, and Jack Kelley, Director of the National Weather Service, observed that the Midwest drought was the worst since 1955.

Farmers in the agricultural heartland took heed of the warning. Many who were storing their 1999 yields held off putting their crops on the market, reckoning that a drought-induced falloff in production this year would drive up prices.

What happened was just the opposite. Timely rains and cooler-than-predicted temperatures have offered promise of bumper crops in much of the Midwest and other parts of the nation this fall, ensuring that grain and soybean prices will go down for the third straight year due to continuing oversupply.

Last week, the Department of Agriculture lowered its price projections for corn, soybeans and wheat. The point being that a serious, sober examination of the topic is long overdue.

C Again, as noted, this is very serious business with real impacts to the American economy and the lives and well being of our citizens.

C I welcome all of our witnesses here today.